

THE GLASGOW TASK FORCE
REPORT ON WELFARE AND BENEFIT CHALLENGES IN
THE CITY

**REPORT FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
SCOTLAND**

26th MARCH 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact of the recent economic downturn led the Secretary of State for Scotland to announce a Glasgow Task Force to examine the welfare challenges facing the City of Glasgow and most particularly, how to overcome difficulties faced by the most disadvantaged citizens.

Following intensive discussions across organisations dealing with welfare and benefit issues, four areas consistently emerged where change is needed – improving the way services work together; introducing flexibilities within the benefit system; offering unemployed people a more direct person centred support package and finally, improving employer engagement.

The Task Force therefore proposes that the key recommendations focus on :

- A “**Glasgow Guarantee**” - the need for a formal commitment from the public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to provide a simplified support service, tailored to help unemployed people into work. The Guarantee must be driven by the sharing of core objectives and performance management systems across organisational boundaries
- **Benefit flexibilities** designed to offer extended financial support to unemployed people to encourage the transition from welfare into sustainable employment
- A “**Person Centred Employment**” approach - a simplified, flexible approach which is person centred, will help manage transitions and engage employers and local communities
- **More effective employer involvement** – through a campaign aimed at garnering private, public and voluntary sector employer support for the Glasgow Guarantee aims

This report has been produced in the context of the City of Glasgow, however the Task Force acknowledges that its recommendations could also be applied in other areas of the UK.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Jim Murphy, the Secretary of State for Scotland recognised the need to examine the continuing entrenched worklessness that exists within Glasgow. At the State of the City Conference on 29th November 2009, he announced a study into welfare policy in Glasgow. The aim was to examine the welfare challenges facing the City, supporting the Government's wish to guide people away from welfare dependency and create sustainable employment opportunities for those most disadvantaged groups.

At the National Jobs Summit in Glasgow on 11th January 2010, this message was reinforced during the discussions led by the Secretary of State and the First Minister, where they highlighted the growing need to tackle worklessness in Glasgow and encouraged the audience to actively engage in meaningful discussion with the Task Force.

1.2 The Task Force

The Glasgow Task Force was established in January 2010. The Task Force comprised the Chair, Professor Pamela Gillies, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University and Stuart Patrick, Chief Executive of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. In addition, key contributors to the Glasgow Task Force were David Coyne, Executive Director of Glasgow Works and David Collie, Glasgow District Manager, Jobcentre Plus.

Professor Alan McGregor and Victoria Sutherland of the University of Glasgow's Training & Employment Research Unit have provided the evidence base to support the deliberations and recommendations of the Task Force. Susan Quinn was seconded from Jobcentre Plus to the Scotland Office to undertake a project management support role to the Glasgow Task Force.

Margaret Thomson, community representative on the Task Force has suffered from ill health and unfortunately has been unable to participate in Task Force business.

The Glasgow Task Force acknowledges the serious efforts made within Glasgow to reduce the level of worklessness in the City over the last decade. Evidence of the significant contribution made by Glasgow Works over the last year has also been apparent.

1.3 Terms of Reference

The Glasgow Task Force objectives were –

- to examine the welfare challenges within the City of Glasgow, with a particular focus on generational poverty and benefit reliance

- to consider the particular problems in the area and look at potential solutions for the City within a UK benefits system
- to build on the work of the City Strategy Partnership and examine whether additional flexibility and employment support could make a real step change towards shared goals

The focus of the Task Force was to remain firmly on the challenge of sustained employment for disadvantaged people. Task Force objectives did not include analysis of the local labour market, or the identification of specific measures that could be enacted to encourage job creation within the current economic downturn.

1.4 Consultation exercise

Between 15th January -17th March '10, Task Force members held 11 meetings with 29 experts from the fields of employment, education, training, poverty, health and housing. In addition, business community and benefit recipient representatives were also involved in the process. (A full list of the organisations involved in the consultation process can be found at Annex 1). The consultation exercise also involved senior officials from the Scotland Office, the Scottish Government and the Department for Work & Pensions.

2. Issues that emerged

A broad range of welfare and benefit topics was covered in free flowing discussion, with an emphasis on ideas for change. (Topics covered are detailed in Annex 2).

The consultation process highlighted many issues that need to be addressed, in particular the complexities within the current welfare and benefits system. There was consensus that greater flexibility within the structure and application of the benefits system would assist more people into work.

There is also a need for a more effective, joined up approach to tackling worklessness in the City. This must be driven by the sharing of core objectives and the performance management of cross agency working.

There was recognition that unemployed people have to interact with a myriad of support organisations from health and housing to employment, during their journey towards sustainable employment. Too often, vulnerable and disadvantaged people do not possess the skills or confidence to deal with the level of bureaucracy that exists and can easily fall through the system. A single point of entry into the welfare system, with sustained support for the individual throughout their journey, is required.

It was identified that additional support must be in place at crucial transition points for the individual, to ensure the “revolving door syndrome” does not

occur. Also, further work is required around the deep-rooted attitudinal issues, expectations and aspirations of some young people towards employment.

Despite the focus being on public sector agencies / organisations, it was widely recognised that the private and voluntary sectors have a significant role to play in addressing some of the issues identified.

Whilst it was felt that the Task Force should focus its recommendations on the key areas of consensus underpinned by an evidence base (see Annex 3 for research report), it recognised that many of the wider issues identified in Annex 2 are elements of a menu that City Partners could also seek to progress.

3. Recommendations

The Task Force concluded that there is a need for the areas below to be tackled with urgency, supported where feasible by activities in the longer list in Annex 2.

3.1 Improving the way services work together

The Glasgow Task Force acknowledges the work of the City Strategy Partnership initiative and recommends that this is developed further to achieve maximum impact from available resources. The next step should be the creation of a Concordat group and the development of -

A “**Glasgow Guarantee**” or commitment to all unemployed people in the City of Glasgow that Concordat members representing public, private and voluntary sector organisations will be obliged to work together to provide a simplified support service, tailored to help each individual resident into work.

Concordat Members

Concordat members will be –

- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow Works
- Local Regeneration Agencies in Glasgow
- Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
- Glasgow Community Planning Partnership
- Jobcentre Plus
- Skills Development Scotland / Careers Scotland
- NHS Glasgow / Glasgow Community Health & Care Partnerships
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector

An Educational tier of Concordat members, comprising Glasgow’s FE / HE sector will support the aims of the Glasgow Guarantee and will operate, (where and when appropriate), within it’s principles. We would hope to see

the Scottish Higher and Further Education Funding Council embrace the concordat and resource educational establishments accordingly.

Further liaison will be required with the Scottish Government and the Department for Work & Pensions, as the major funders of employability provision in the City, to explain the aims and objectives of the Glasgow Guarantee and to secure their ongoing support to take account of the Guarantee aims, prior to awarding funds.

It is recommended Concordat members will work to deliver the Glasgow Guarantee focusing, in the first instance, on cross service working, maximising benefit flexibility, the person centred approach and employer involvement.

3.2 Introducing more flexibility within the Benefits System

- The complexities that exist within the UK benefits system often appear unhelpful to unemployed people attempting to take their first steps towards employment. During the Task Force consultation period, many examples were highlighted of individuals who had experienced severe financial difficulties through loss of their “benefits package”, ultimately leading to the inability to sustain their employment. The ability to maintain a level of financial security whilst moving from unemployment to the workplace cannot be underestimated
- An extension of the support offered for housing costs (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit) from up to 4 weeks to a minimum of 8-12 weeks would provide welcome support for those people moving from welfare into work
- Raising the amount individuals can earn whilst still receiving benefits (known as the Earnings Disregard) would allow people to take up part time employment opportunities, with a view to this leading to full time employment in the future. Current disregard levels are very low and do not act as an incentive to return to work. By raising the disregard levels, it is hoped that many claimants may take up the opportunity of “testing out” a return to work and building their capacity through working a small number of hours per week
- The Task Force recommends that Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit extension and an increase in earnings disregard should also be made available to support unemployed people during the transition from benefits to self employment or social enterprise ventures
- The “in work” credit for Lone Parents (£40 per week for first 52 weeks in work) is only available to those unemployed for a year or more. Reducing the eligibility to those lone parents who have been 6 months or more unemployed would prove a real incentive to lone parents wishing to enter the labour market

- Reducing the number of hours individuals must work before becoming eligible for Working Tax Credit would also prove an incentive to those returning to the workplace
- Debate took place within the Task Force around the effectiveness of the current welfare support systems in place for young people leaving care and offenders prior to leaving prison. Early intervention and increased additional support is required for these disadvantaged groups (as highlighted in Annex 2)

3.3 A Person Centred Employment approach

This approach has grown from the need to break down the complexities within the welfare and benefits system and the recognition that sustained support for the individual is vital. The Person Centred Approach mirrors current welfare reform policy and has been adopted by both Governments, however more can be done to progress this approach. The recommendations as outlined below will operate under the ethos of the Glasgow Guarantee and will have the full support of Concordat members -

- A single point of entry into the system is important to ensure people receive the correct information and referral to the most appropriate source of help quickly. A virtual “one stop shop” staffed by Concordat member secondees should be established. This would provide an excellent development opportunity for staff committed to supporting people into work. Shared Key Work Objectives will provide the foundation for a greater understanding of Concordat member organisations aims and objectives
- A Case & Condition Management approach for all. The ability to maximise the functional capacity of an individual is essential and must take into account personal needs in relation to education, health, employment / training as well as personal safety. The integrated case & condition management approach should be adopted by Concordat organisations for school leavers through to long term unemployed people
- A Single Assessment Tool to be utilised by Concordat member staff upon initial contact with clients. Lead responsibility for the client journey to rest with the organisation where the initial contact is made, in an effort to reduce the number of organisations involved and ensure a tailored, streamlined support service for individuals
- The need to build capacity within local communities to support people to make the transition from unemployment to sustained employment is recognised. The “barefoot employment adviser” approach, where community activists, employees or volunteers will take on the role of community mentors, channelling unemployed people directly to Concordat member organisations, should be developed. A trusted community based intermediary approach has been evidenced as successful in the UK and

Europe. The Task Force recommends that 100 community mentors are identified to receive advocacy, problem solving and case management training, prior to undertaking a mentoring role for unemployed people in their local communities. Community mentors will be able to access employment, health, housing and social work networks to build a support structure for individuals, ensuring demonstrable savings across Concordat organisational budgets. The Task Force recognises the important role our FE Colleges could play in supporting this approach, together with the challenges currently facing FE Colleges with regard to funding and the implications this has on an individual's benefit package

- Engagement with young people through local sport and culture Champions may prove successful and will allow young people to develop confidence as well as transferable skills which will be viewed by employers as an asset in the workplace

3.4 Employer Involvement

The need to ensure Glasgow's young people are viewed by employers as competitive is paramount and employer support for the Glasgow Guarantee will be critical.

- A marketing campaign should be delivered through recognised systematic channels to business, in particular Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and the FSB, to garner private sector support for the Guarantee's aims
- An aspirational "rite of passage", identified as a key route to engage with young men, (linking with the apprenticeship routeway), requires further exploration with Skills Development Scotland and private sector employers
- The use of "Iconic Branding" in relation to specific companies and / or industries could encourage the engagement of young people in workplace ethics (eg. Microsoft, Apple etc.)
- In an effort to reflect the community served by the public sector, all public sector vacancies should be advertised through Jobcentre Plus. This recommendation mirrors one of the emerging issues identified during the National Jobs Summit. Also, at the request of Scotland Office Ministers, the Scottish Government has offered broad support for this recommendation and there is now a need to progress to a meaningful conclusion
- Delivering a re-packaging of the Jobcentre Plus employer support package within the remit of the Jobcentre Plus flexibilities pilot in Glasgow is supported by the Task Force. The opportunity to test the impact of varying subsidy rates for different target groups should not be missed

The marketing of a new Jobcentre Plus employer support package could be delivered through the recognised channels to business under the auspices of the Glasgow Guarantee

- There is a need for a mechanism within the Concordat to manage the interface between SMEs and Government employment programmes. The mechanism should be designed to reduce the bureaucracy and risks attached to engagement with new initiatives / programmes for SMEs

4. Essential mechanisms to ensure the Glasgow Guarantee works –

- A common set of core objectives embedded in each Concordat member organisation
- Performance measurement of the core objectives within each organisation
- An alignment of resources and rationalisation of service provision (building on the Glasgow Works model), particularly in relation to the employer engagement agenda within Glasgow
- The necessity for all Concordat members to advise of the development of new initiatives / bids for funding prior to submission, thereby ensuring objectives are in line with the Glasgow Guarantee
- Commitment from all funding providers to take account of the Glasgow Guarantee prior to awarding monies
- The requirement for all organisations making bids for funding to sign up to the Glasgow Guarantee to enable them to access future funding
- A requirement for all Concordat member organisations to utilise a single assessment tool when interacting with clients
- A symbol (or chartermark) to demonstrate the Concordat member organisations support for the Glasgow Guarantee

5. Cost of Task Force Recommendations

The Glasgow Task Force recommendations have been made from the basis of a cash flat perspective, building on existing staffing and resources in place within Concordat member organisations.

Early discussions with the Scottish Government and the Department for Work & Pensions, as well as key agencies, ie. Glasgow Works, Jobcentre Plus and Skills Development Scotland, will be essential in order to gain a commitment from chief executive officers to support the Task Force recommendations.

Detailed evaluation plans will need to be put in place at the outset to capture the full cost benefit picture over time.

Annex 1

Organisations involved in the Glasgow Task Force Consultation process

29 consultees have met with Task Force members. The consultees have been drawn from :

- Jobcentre Plus
- Dept. for Work & Pensions
- Scottish Government
- Skills Development Scotland
- The Scotland Office
- Glasgow Works
- Glasgow Regeneration Agencies
- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
- Glasgow Employer Coalition
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector
- Glasgow Housing Association
- Glasgow South West Community Health & Care Partnership
- Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS
- Anniesland College
- Cardonald College
- Langside College
- John Wheatley College
- One Parent Families Scotland
- STUC
- Disability Employment Advisory Commission
- Momentum Organisation
- Secretary of State's Poverty Action Group
- Poverty Truth Commission
- University of Glasgow – Training & Employment Research Unit
- University of Glasgow – Scottish Observatory for Work & Health
- The Wise Group

In addition to the above representatives, the Research Team met with a number of local unemployed, or previously unemployed people, to develop case studies for the research report

Annex 2

Discussion topics covered

- DWP benefit reforms
- Jobcentre Plus flexibility pilots
- Employer Engagement
- Lone Parents / childcare
- IB Claimant issues
- Unemployed people accessing self employment / social enterprise
- Care Leavers (need to develop specific routeway / additional support for Care Leavers to ensure a successful transition to sustainable employment)
- Ex-offenders
- Supported Employment initiatives
- Housing issues
- Peer mentoring
- Rite of passage for young people
- Transitions from school to work / confidence building
- Transitions from unemployment to the workplace
- Improving social / communication skills in young people
- Iconic branding
- Local Champions
- Community mentors
- Advertising of public sector vacancies
- Public sector procurement processes
- FE College funding / implications on benefits package
- 21st century careers service
- Single point of entry to welfare system
- Personal centred employment approach
- Employability on prescription
- Need for a fully joined up approach to welfare system in Glasgow
- Poverty issues
- Customer / Peoples Charter – “Glasgow Guarantee”
- Need for an individual case and condition management approach
- Need for a Single Assessment Tool
- Glasgow – many initiatives but proper evaluation of projects lacking
- Need for continuous improvement and building on success